



DATE: March 03, 2022

TO: Labor and Public Employees Committee

FROM: Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy & Division Advisor, The Alliance

RE: H.B. 5248: An Act Concerning Collateral Consequences of Criminal Convictions on Occupational Licensing

Good morning, Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Senator Sampson, Representative Arora, and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 5248, An Act Concerning Collateral Consequences of Criminal Convictions on Occupational Licensing.

We commend the Committee for introducing this legislation and acknowledging the critical importance of meaningful employment opportunities for persons engaged in the reentry process after incarceration. This bill would address the collateral occupational licensing consequences of a criminal record, initially establishing a Council to review and eliminate the consequences that exist within our state's occupational licensing.

The National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction references more than 550 collateral consequences for those living with a criminal record.<sup>i</sup> H.B. 5248 would be an important step in addressing issues related to meaningful employment, which are among the most impactful consequences. The proposed legislation would allow access to a range of occupational licenses to people with criminal records by requiring consideration of whether a criminal conviction is reasonably related to the ability to safely or competently perform the duties or responsibilities associated with the license. Currently, five states have adopted provisions related to discrimination based on records of arrest or conviction in their fair employment law. As a national leader of criminal justice reform, Connecticut should adopt similar provisions.

Enhancing employment opportunities would also improve public safety by reducing recidivism rates and improve the fiscal outlook not only for these individuals and their families, but for communities across the state.

One in three Americans has some type of criminal record, which can create lifelong barriers to opportunity for them and their families. A criminal record should not be a life sentence to poverty. People who have served their time deserve a fair opportunity for a better future. To better achieve equity, especially across race and income, barriers to employment, education, and housing must be removed.

Most criminal justice research focuses on the effectiveness of programs that seek to reduce recidivism by changing offender attitudes and behavior. Reductions in recidivism translate to breaking the cycle of crime and poverty. The proposed legislation continues the efforts of the legislature to build on past success, maintain momentum of the Second Chance Society Initiative, and provide the tools necessary to ensure that these returning citizens are actively engaged and invested in the reentry process, their families, and their communities.

In addition to the proposed legislation, we urge your continued support of reentry services within the community which are essential to the ongoing success of the previous Second Chance Society Initiative. According to the January 2022 OPM Monthly Indicators Report<sup>ii</sup>, community providers are serving approximately 3,300 people in

programs which are funded by Department of Corrections. Thousands more receive services through providers that contract with the Court Support Services Division of Judicial Branch.

Community nonprofits in Connecticut work to reintegrate former offenders into their communities. Community Justice providers support justice-involved individuals and their families, as well as survivors of crime. These programs, funded by the Department of Correction and the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch, continue to play an essential role in the ongoing success related to criminal justice reform in Connecticut.

Once again, The Alliance urges the committee to support H.B. 5248. The ability of the state to ensure continuation of the criminal justice reforms that have positioned Connecticut as a national leader, is greatly dependent on a sustainable system of services, as provided by the nonprofit sector.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues.

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i National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction:

[https://niccc.csgjusticecenter.org/database/results/?jurisdiction=260&consequence\\_category=&narrow\\_category=&triggering\\_offense\\_category=&consequence\\_type=&duration\\_category=&page\\_number=1](https://niccc.csgjusticecenter.org/database/results/?jurisdiction=260&consequence_category=&narrow_category=&triggering_offense_category=&consequence_type=&duration_category=&page_number=1)

ii January 2022 OPM Monthly Indicators Report: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OPM/CJPPD/CjResearch/MonthlyIndicators/2022-MONTHLY-INDICATOR-REPORTS/Monthly-Indicators-Report-2022-January.pdf>